



Promoting sustainable agriculture  
since 1974

## Mixed Nuts

Although our customers may not immediately think of buying nuts from their produce distributor, Veritable Vegetable carries a full range of fresh nuts during the holiday season, including walnuts, almonds, pistachios, and chestnuts. Our sales manager Karen Salinger recommends merchandising these delicious nuts in your produce section during the holidays to add variety. Nuts can also be promoted as a healthy alternative to sweets during the holiday season.

- Karen Salinger,  
Sales Manager



*because walnuts look eerily like  
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head ailments*

## The Wondrous Walnut

Prior to working at Veritable Vegetable, to me, fresh walnuts were mysterious orbs; unappealing and unworthy of the labor needed to garner substantial amounts of useable matter. Walnuts would appear during the holidays on tables lingering amongst *hors d'oeuvres*; impenetrable, unappetizing, and messy to crack open. But, thankfully, all my phobias dispersed upon tasting my first freshly cracked walnut!



In medieval times, foods similar to body parts were attributed health benefits for the body part they resembled. Because walnuts look eerily like brains, they were commonly used as a supplement for head ailments. In modern times, through the advance of medicine, we now know that walnuts actually do support brain function, prevent heart disease, and control cholesterol. Rich in omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants, walnuts pack nutritional punch.

Once grown almost exclusively in France, walnuts were brought to the U.S. in the 1800's. Now, California crops account for two-thirds of global supply. Walnuts' first appearance in history occurred four thousand years ago in ancient Persia, hence the name of the most commonly eaten and cultivated walnut—the Persian walnut. Mostly grown for eating and for pressing into oil, the Persian walnut is particularly prized for its large nut meat and thin shell. Walnut oil should not be subjected to high cooking temperatures, and instead used on salads, or as a finishing oil. This preserves its essential nutrients.

Walnuts occupy a special place in cultural lore and mythology. According to Greek mythology, Dionysus, the god of wine, fell in love with Carya, the daughter of a mortal king and queen. When she died, Dionysus transformed her into a walnut tree. Carya's father, upon learning of her fate, ordered the construction of a temple to commemorate his daughter. The temple's columns were sculpted in wood and named *caryatides*, immortalizing the walnut tree in Greek architecture.

Extremely versatile, walnuts are used globally for many different culinary applications; from raw to cooked, and candied to pickled. My favorite way to prepare walnuts involves first soaking them for at least a few hours in

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cold (or room temperature) salted water. Once drained and dried, place the walnuts on a tray and put in a 375 degree oven for about 20-30 minutes, or until the nuts are toasty on the outside. This method of soaking and toasting improves the flavor and removes all traces of bitterness, whilst maintaining a deliciously moist center.

- Denise Mc Allan, Purchaser

## The Real McCoy

Gordon McCoy and his wife Janet didn't start farming until Gordon had already retired from his first career as the senior vice president of a bank. In addition to being an organic walnut farmer, McCoy is a living piece of history. He grew up in rural Oregon, the son of farmers, during the Great Depression. During this time, farmers suffered greatly, as crop prices fell suddenly by 40 - 60% and remained low for years. His parents struggled to keep the family surviving through the Depression years. "They had a cow, a horse and a couple of kids; that's all," he says. He attended school in a one-room schoolhouse, and the teacher rode a horse to school every day. At that time, ice cream cost a nickel, and most families were so poor that ice cream was a treat reserved only for special occasions, like birthdays. Farming families were lucky to earn \$1,000 per year. Thankfully, for Gordon, farming his five acres of cherries and walnuts (plus a small plot of vegetables for family and friends) is more of a pleasure than a matter of life or death as it was when he was a child.

McCoy Ranch, located about two hours away from San Francisco in the Central Valley, holds three acres of cherry trees and two acres of Hartley walnuts—just over 100 walnut trees. These walnut trees were planted 27 years ago, and are grafted onto black walnut rootstock because black walnut trees are hardy and will withstand extreme frost. McCoy gets his compost from a neighboring farm, the ranch is strictly no-till, and he uses no herbicides or pesticides. He says he's very fortunate that pests and disease are not a problem.

His Hartley walnut trees blossom in March, and the walnuts are ready to be harvested in early October. He does not use a machine to shake the trees when it's time to harvest the walnuts; instead he relies on a some friends and neighbors to help knock the walnuts down with poles! After harvesting, the walnuts cure, or dry in the sun for a few days. Then they are ready for market. The shells of the Hartley walnut are thin but well-sealed, pretty, and symmetrical, and the nut meat is light-colored, heart-shaped and flavorful. After bringing the nuts to Veritable Vegetable, Gordon McCoy then stops off at the nearby San Francisco Food Bank. He gives the asymmetrical, and therefore unsellable (yet perfectly good for eating!) walnuts to the Food Bank for their food donation programs to soup kitchens, homeless shelters, childcare centers, et cetera. The Food Bank feeds 124,000 hungry people per year, and Gordon McCoy is one of the people who helps them do this.

We at Veritable greatly appreciate Gordon taking time to talk with us, and hope you have enjoyed learning a bit about this fascinating farmer. He's the real McCoy!

- Dani Yamamoto

## Walnut Arugula Pesto

Perfect for winter, this recipe is hearty and flavorful; the sautéed garlic can be used raw for less prep time, or if a stronger garlic flavor is desired. Try adding sun dried tomatoes, or replace the arugula with spinach for delicious alternatives. It's possible to use a mortar and pestle to make this recipe, but a food processor is less labor-intensive.

- Denise Mc Allan

### Ingredients:

3 garlic cloves, minced and sautéed until golden  
¾ cup of walnuts, soaked and toasted  
Zest of half a lemon  
1/3 cup of freshly grated parmesan (optional)  
½ cup extra virgin olive oil  
3-4 sprigs of parsley  
1 medium (or 2 small) bunches of arugula, washed  
Salt and pepper to taste

### Method:

1. Place the garlic, nuts, lemon zest, and parmesan in a food processor. Drizzling the olive oil into the mixture, pulse process until the mixture looks like a paste.
2. Add the parsley and arugula, then pulse to combine. More oil or a little water can be added at this point if a thinner consistency is desired.
3. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve with pasta, spread on pizza, or toss with roasted potatoes. Covered and refrigerated, pesto will keep for up to a week.

